

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, August 8, 1876, with transcript

a joke! Brantford, Ont. Tuesday Aug. 8th, 1876. My dear May,

It was with a feeling of intense relief that I returned from Paris this evening to find two letters and a telegram awaiting me — from Cambridge.

There has been an undefined sort of dread hovering over me since the receipt of your Saturday's letter — a kind of shadow of approaching evil — or perhaps — and this is probably the true explanation — the legacy of a nervous headache.

Your letter was so full of ill-news — every person seemed to be ill — or dying or dead — that when you mentioned your visit to Dr. Blake I began to feel anxious on your account. It is true there was nothing very alarming in your letter concerning yourself — but the non-arrival of a letter from you on Monday rendered me seriously uneasy — and I telegraphed for news — knowing that the mail could not bring me word till tonight.

However nothing came in reply — and I went to Paris in a very un-enviable frame of mind. I can't say that I enjoyed my wanderings there to any great extent — but I did enjoy your letters when I returned to Brantford.

The telegram brought me the double news of your health — & of your father's arrival in Cambridge. Please remember me kindly to him. I have been in “mortal dread” of receiving another letter from my “neglected 2 friend” — but I suppose there is no fear of that — he must have given me up as incorrigible long ago! Shortly after hearing from your father came telegram No. 2 from him which I enclose. Can you explain it? If you cannot — then I can! A case had been alluded to in the papers this morning of a man who had died from the bite of a black fly. When the telegram was put into my hands I saw at once it was one

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of Uncle David's practical jokes — and handed it back to him with the remark that he had better disguise his handwriting next time.

My mother however was quite taken in — and offered me all sorts of consolatory remarks in regard to the — I declare I forgot how to spell the word [???] and have not a dictionary at hand — the innocuous nature of the black fly 's bite. I am afraid “innocuous” does not look right yet — I shall have to look it up before I send my letter. How does “innocuous” strike you? No that is certainly wrong! I better join the next spelling bee! and reform my spelling.

Many thanks for telling me about the electrical experiments. They are interesting & new to me. I shall try to obtain a bottle of Sour Spring water for presentation to Prof. Horsford. I have tried the earth — but there seems to be very little of the peculiar salt in it — and the liquid does not become clear.

I leave here on Monday or Tuesday next for Toronto with Uncle Edward & Frances. We shall proceed down 3rd St. Lawrence to Montreal and thence to Boston via Portland. Please excuse this letter. I am tired out with my Paris journey.

Telegraphic experiments for Thursday between Brantford & Paris — and on Friday we spend the day with Chief Smoke Johnson — Principal at Chief of the Six Nation Indians — and a descendant of the renowned “Thayendanegea” alias Capt. Brant — who scalped the Americans during the revolutionary war!!

With ever so much love Your own Alec.